DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 608 SP 019 611

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TITLE Human Relations in Education: Its Time Has Come.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Change; *Human Relations; Individual Differences; Individual Needs; *Intergroup Education; *Interpersonal Competence; Leadership Training; Role Models; School Community Relationship; *School Role; Social Attitudes; Student Teacher Relationship; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Education; *Teacher Responsibility; Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

Through the use of human relations techniques, educators can bring about significant changes in the schools. The primary factor is to implement a planned program that will promote better relationships between individuals of different races, religions, and national origins. In order to do this, it may be necessary to reshape the attitudes held by members of the school community. There are five ways that school faculties can improve human relations in the school: (1) encourage harmonious interaction between groups of students by emphasizing the value of different approaches to problems; (2) provide opportunities for role playing by students to increase the depth of their understanding of other people and develop a readiness to participate actively with their classmates; (3) stay aware of the personal problems students are facing in their private lives and accept the responsibility for being an adult role model; (4) provide an example of willingness to change personal attitudes and accommodate other members of the school family; and (5) maintain good rapport with the community and uphold a good image for school community relations. Appended are checklists for teachers and administrators to enable them to analyze their efforts to provide the best educational experience possible for all of their students. (JD)

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HUMAN RELATIONS IN EDUCATION:

ITS TIME HAS COME

by

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1978

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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SP 019611

Human Relations in Education:

Its Time Has Come

Human relations is one aspect of education that most professional educators express concerns, however few educators take the initiative to become proficient. Although concerns are expressed, the individual educator can do very little to improve human relations skills. The school district board and administration will have to provide opportunities for staff development in human relations techniques. College and university schools of education should also give human relations competency a higher priority than they do. Most college and university teacher-education programs prepare their students very well in the cognitive domain. The students can teach reading, writing, mathematics - the subject matter - but few college professors expend much effort in the affective domain. The feelings, values, and basic concerns of students are given a high priority in few university teacher-preparation programs.

There is a general feeling that the elementary programs do a better job of addressing human relations concerns than secondary programs. This assumption is based upon the idea that most elementary programs are geared to meeting individual needs and much time is spent on learning to teach, as opposed to secondary programs that require their students to spend time learning subject matter, almost neglecting individual student needs and fundamental teaching techniques.

The spark of interest that led to the writing of this article came from a book used in an educational administration class, The Principalship: New Perspectives. The authors felt that one of the major sources of problems that public school administrators would have to confront in the future would be

human relations (Jacobson and others, 1973:20). This was surprising! Most educators would expect to see discipline, student and teacher rights, etc., listed, not human relations. After much self-evaluation and consideration, the "bright light of insight" did shine on this writer. The realization that most teachers and administrators are totally unprepared for that FIRST volatile confrontation between student, teacher, parent, administrator, became very evident. How these confrontations are handled directly relates to the job satisfaction of school personnel.

These volatile confrontations do occur and are occurring in our schools today. Only through improved human relations techniques and concepts can the professional educator of today be prepared to meet the complex school problems of the future.

Human Relations Defined

At this point, it may be valuable to define human relations. Human relations is defined as: "the broad area of a group interacting with and within a group; of individuals interacting with individuals." Good human relations includes treating the other fellow the way you would like to be treated though he may differ from you in religion, race, national origin or social class. It involves making the most of yourself and helping your neighbor make the most of himself (Wilson, 1972:5).

The dictionary further defines human relations as "belonging or relating to man or as connections, kinship or affinity." The art of human relations is nothing more than the art of being human. Schools can play a vital part in furthering this role (Handbook, 1976:137). Schools represent a key element in the growth of a child. It is the most important public institution related to a child's development. The school transforms the individual into an informed, educated human being (Wilson, 1972:6).

There are many factors involved in promoting positive human relations in the school. The primary factor is to implement a planned program that will promote better relationships between individuals of different races, religions, and national origins. In order to obtain this objective, it may be necessary to reshape the attitudes held by members of the school community. A human relations program cannot be effective if intergroup education is confined to one course or one area of the curriculum. It must become a part of the total educational program. In addition to sharing a common objective, the program must develop a common awareness of the need to appreciate differences, as well as similarities, among people in order to build good relations.

The old concept of America as a "melting pot" of people is being rejected by many educators who are seeking to broaden the understanding among people. One educator has stated, "We are coming to recognize that the strength of America is in the diversity of its people. The melting pot idea is giving way to the recognition of the need for understanding and appreciation of those who may represent other races or national origins" (Time, 1977:81). The idea of the "melting pot" has changed to a "salad bowl" concept where all groups are struggling to maintain their cultures and ideals. These are facets of human relations that must be considered in our schools.

The Role of the School

Public schools are a central gathering place for many persons of different age groups and provide an excellent place for practicing human relations.

> Human relations is an essential facet of any people-oriented project. And when it comes to education, everything is people-oriented: Affirmative Action programs; migrant and alien education issues; racial and ethnic concerns; student/teacher, teacher/teacher, teacher/administrator, and parent/teacher relations; and more (Thorp, 1978:24).

Recognizing the new needs of the students today, many school faculties are following one of several roles in an attempt to promote human relations. It must keep in mind that there is a variance in the degree of involvement in any particular role by any schools. There are generally five major roles that school faculties may utilize.

The first role of human relations that some schools encourage involves preventive education. "This is ... a continuing study of learners, their nature and needs, growth and development, in relation to self and other persons. It means also the effort to provide instruction and experience before human relations may become a conscious, persistent problem." Regardless of what course is being taught, there are human relations techniques being utilized. Whether the subject is math, science, language arts, building trades, or physical education, the student will be interacting with one or more human beings. It is through this interaction that human relations comes into play. One of the objectives of human relations is the need to get along with your fellow man. This is of vital importance if a harmonious environment is to be established in which students can fulfill not only their cognitive needs but also their affective needs (Cook, 1957:20).

One of the human relations programs being used in the public schools focuses on students trying to solve problems by discussing them in groups.

> Solutions to problems are influenced by certain biases and mental sets which reduce the objective quality of thinking. When various members of a group hold different biases and mental sets, these tend to become neutralized through discussion. However, when group members hold similar biases and mental sets their presence is not apparent, and the final product is therefore lowered in quality (Maier, 1963:18).

Role playing is also very useful in human relations. In this program, the students can act out certain roles while at the same time start to feel more comfortable among themselves. It reduces some of the inhibitions they may have and promotes their eagerness to contribute to the class. There are different exercises that can be used in role playing. Regardless of the exercise used, it will usually have about the same objectives stated.

> Objectives may be as follows: As a result of the exercise (1) students will begin to understand the forces that block communication in classroom groups, (2) individuals will begin to express themselves more freely in the class, (3) the class, including the teacher, will begin to become closer as a group, and (4) students will develop a readiness to participate actively in course planning, course discussions, and evaluation of their learning (Gorman, 1970:64).

The third role is concerned with the aid to area homes and agencies in their child-rearing and educational functions. The schools can provide a place for people to meet and also provide information to the interested persons with problems. In today's society, many students are attending schools with significant personal problems. There are numerous examples of students that are products of a broken home. Most of the time, when students are caught in the middle of a divorce, they will definitely undergo personal changes. This is a time of conflict (Cook, 1957:20).

> Joseph Bruscato, Vernon Township program director for the Omni-House Youth Service Bureau in suburban Chicago, agrees. 'There really is a noticeable difference between the number of kids we get who are having problems, who are in trouble, coming from broken homes, and the number who are coming from natural homes. I'd say it's about three to one coming from broken homes.'

What many of these students need are models that they can follow and imitate. The idea of being a role model is not something that teachers readily accept, however, it seems to come with the job. Any time an individual stands in front of a group as a figure of authority, we are in fact, role modeling.

> Sandra Kagan, a child and family counselor at the American Institute of Family Relations in Los Angeles, has many times said that kids need to have positive role models to prevent them from going through a lot of experimentation. These positive role models need not be the natural parents, but they must be adults who can supply a different kind of picture from the negative image of males, husbands, females, or wives, that the child may have....(Gohla, 1978:18).

The fourth role of the school is to improve its own internal human relations. This is the most important role that some schools can develop. The school concerned with human relations needs to make it a matter of routine to demonstrate proper techniques of interacting with people. The teachers and administrators must provide an example of behavior that the students can follow. In other words, the schools must practice what they preach (Cook, 1957:21).

While involved in the process of trying to set an example for the students to follow, the schools may have to change a few attitudes. The problem of reeducating attitudes is not a simple one. "Little progress can be made in reeducating attitudes unless the individual feels some uncertainty about his current adjustment or outlook" (Bush and Berrion, 1957:209). The student must be deeply involved and concerned to have a successful change of attitude.

> They must have a part in creating it. In a sense, the new attitude must come out of their own experience, rather than be imposed upon them. At the very minimum the people whose attitudes are to be changed must feel that they are changing their attitudes because they want to and not because they must. More than that, the new attitude will be accepted in proportion to their feeling of personal investment of time, effort, and thought in the process of arriving at the new point of view (Bush and Berrion, 1957:208).

The fifth role to be discussed is one of a good image for the school-community relations. "This image is one of people working together for the common good" (Look, 1957:21). The schools need to maintain a good rapport with the community since the schools are responsible for the community's children. They are also spending the community's share of taxes. The school and community both need to be involved.

There exists a countless number of methods to demonstrate how to practice human relations. Besides visiting homes one can get involved with the community in developing policies for the school. Another way of emphasizing human relations is to learn certain facts about various education programs. Even reporting a suspected incident of child abuse is considered human relations. So the forms that human relations may take make up an endless number of examples. In order for the school to survive and work in harmony with the community, they must both work to maintain good human relations.

The five roles that have been discussed in the preceding pages do not indicate that they are the only ones schools can assume. A more careful and detailed study would probably reveal more roles that are being used in promoting human relations. Nevertheless, one can see that different schools and organizations are getting more involved in promoting human relations.

A Final Note

Through the use of human relations techniques, educators can bring about significant changes in the schools. We need to cause students to seek new ways to solve new problems - not old ways to solve old problems. Someone once said that "education is what we have left after we have forgotten what we learned at school." In education we tend to treat symptoms of problems - not causes of problems. With increasing complexities of students in schools today, educators must have the ability to counsel with, relate to, and teach our youth. The use of human relations techniques may provide the ways and means to complete this very important task.

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APPENDIX ONE

A SHORT COURSE IN HUMAN RELATIONS

The SIX Most Important Words:

"I ADMIT I MADE A MISTAKE"

The FIVE Most Important Words:

"YOU DID A GOOD JOB"

The FOUR Most Important Words:

"WHAT IS YOUR OPINION?"

The THREE Most Important Words:

"IF YOU PLEASE"

The TWO Most Important Words:

"THANK YOU"

The ONE Most Important Word:

"WE"

The LEAST Important Word:

"I"

APPENDIX TWO

A VERY PERSONAL TEST FOR TEACHERS

The following checklist provides guides by which teachers can quickly analyze their efforts to provide the best educational experiences possible for all the students under their responsibility as they move toward a unitary school system. Each question should be answered by placing the appropriate number--1, 2, or 3--in the space provided to the left. A number "1" suggests that little or no effort has been made to initiate or carry out the activity. Number "2" suggests that some consideration has been given to the activity but no thorough approach has been taken. A number "3" would indicate that everthing possible was being done to carry out the activity.

not at all -- 1 somewhat -- 2 to a great extent -- 3

_____1. Can you identify the human problems that block or hinder open and honest communication between yourself and your principal, your fellow teachers, and your students?

_____2. Does your classroom conduct inspire your students to respect one another and be open and honest in their communications with you and with other students?

_____3. Have you read any books or articles lately to increase your understanding of and sensitivity to the particular aspirations, needs, problems, and frustrations of minority or disadvantaged children?

_____4. Have you worked directly and indirectly, to dispel misconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices and other adverse feelings that members of one group have against members of another group?

_____5. Do you take the initiative in dispelling prejudices, stereotypes and misunderstandings among students?

_____6. Do you listen with an open mind to students and faculty members of other groups, even if their communications are initially disturbing or divergent from your own thinking?

_____7. Do you strive to avoid expressions and actions which are unnecessarily offensive to members of other groups?

_____8. Do you take the initiative in discouraging or preventing patterns of informal discrimination, segregation, or exclusion of minority group members from school clubs, committees, etc.?

_____9. Do you utilize techniques and methods, such as improvisational dramatics, role-playing, joint planning of programs by teachers and students, small group sensitivity discussion, analysis of group roles, that will increase spontaneity and honesty of expression, and an understanding of the dynamics of group interaction?

TEST FOR TEACHERS

____10. Are you aware that group prejudices and antagonisms might be reinforced by homogenous or ability grouping, and have you taken steps to prevent this reinforcement?

____11. Do you try to prevent latent prejudices or stereotyped thinking from unfairly influencing your discipline or evaluation of students?

____12. Does your outside reading assignment include accounts of all races and interracial experiences, and are you familiar with bibliographies containing such readings?

____13. Have you checked with your school librarian to learn how much material of this type is available in your school library?

____14. Do you show all ethnic family groups in your bulletin board displays?

____15. Do displays of work and play groups show all ethnic groups working and playing together?

____16. Do your classroom pictures of great people include all ethnic groups?

____17. Have you discarded pictures or posters that reinforce stereotypes of minority groups?

____18. Do you occasionally look through such magazines as Ebony and Jet to obtain appropriate pictures of all ethnic groups that can be used in classroom displays?

____19. Do your pictures of cities include depressed areas as well as high-rise apartments and pretty houses?

____20. Do you use magazine and newspaper articles relating to interracial experiences and problems that can be discussed in class for better human relations?

____21. Do your pictures and posters create a sympathetic awareness of disadvantaged children and groups?

____22. Have you evaluated your textbooks to determine whether they contain fair and appropriate treatment of minority groups?

____23. Have you made efforts to overcome the deficiencies of your textbooks' treatment of minority groups?

____24. Do your students have opportunities to learn democratic skills and values by interacting in problem-solving groups?

____25. Do you use problem-solving groups which concern themselves with real problems in intergroup relations which have immediate relevance to the lives of the students?

____26. Do you organize and present your material (units of work) to include major contributions of minority groups and individuals?

____27. Have you visited or otherwise personally familiarized yourself with the families and communities of your students?

____28. Have you made efforts to involve the parents or guardians of your students in school activities?

____29. Have you attempted to establish and maintain some meaningful contact and dialogue with the parents, guardians and communities from which your students come?

____30. Do you attempt to give special help to any child who needs it without being patronizing?

APPENDIX THREE

A VERY PERSONAL TEST FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS

The following checklist provides guides by which school officials can quickly analyze their efforts to provide the best educational experiences possible for all the students under their responsibility as they move toward a unitary school system. Each question should be answered by placing the appropriate number--1, 2, or 3--in the space provided to the left. A number "1" suggests that little or no effort has been made to initiate or carry out the activity. Number "2" suggests that some consideration has been given to the activity but no thorough approach has been taken. A number "3" would indicate that everything possible was being done to carry out the activity.

not at all -- 1 somewhat -- 2 to a great extent -- 3

_____1. Have the Board of Education and the local school officials provided active and progressive leadership toward the elimination of dual school systems?

_____2. Are local school officials carrying the major responsibility for school desegregation rather than depending upon the voluntary efforts of private citizens?

_____2. Are efforts toward desegregation shared as equitably as possible by members of all ethnic communities?

_____4. Is desegregation being carried out as fast as is administratively feasible, without unnecessary delay?

_____5. Have school officials met with and involved representatives of local organizations, from all ethnic groups, interested in education?

_____6. Has a positive campaign been developed to keep the total community informed of major decisions, plans and progress?

_____7. Have efforts been made to take full advantage of all available technical assistance from local, state and national sources?

_____8. Does the Board of Education have a clear and written policy of providing maximum education for each child?

_____9. Are school officials doing the comprehensive program planning necessary to provide each child with a maximum educational opportunity?

TEST FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS

_____10. Does the Board of Education have a policy which encourages and creates opportunities for bringing together children of diverse backgrounds under conditions which will promote mutual learning and respect for themselves and others?

_____11. Does the Board of Education have a policy which encourages all students to participate fully in all of the activities of the schools?

_____12. Are positive efforts made to staff each school with qualified teachers from diverse backgrounds and with varied experiences?

_____13. Are positive steps taken to hire qualified minority group teachers?

_____14. Has the staff been prepared for school desegregation through an extensive in-service program?

_____15. Has the district planned for staff and student human relations activities prior to desegregation?

_____16. Is positive action being taken to avoid resegregation in classrooms and school activities after desegregation has taken place?

_____17. Is the organization of the school and the school day flexible enough to allow for innovative practices which promote human relations and understanding?

_____18. Are curricula reforms necessary for successful desegregation being studied, developed and implemented?

_____19. Are a substantial number of multi-ethnic and minority group materials available in classrooms and the library?

_____20. Are available human resources representing majority and minority groups used to foster better understandings and to enrich the curriculum?

APPENDIX FOUR

THE BOSS	THE LEADER
Drives his men.	Coaches his men.
Counts on authority.	Gets their good will.
Keeps them guessing, fearful.	Arouses their enthusiasm.
Talks about "I."	Makes it "We."
Says "get here on time."	Gets there ahead of time.
Finds blame for breakdowns.	Fixes the breakdown.
Knows how it is done.	Shows how it is done.
Makes work a drudgery.	Makes work a game.
Says, "Go!"	Says, "Let's go!"